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## IMPRESSIONS OF CONTINENTAL TRAVELLING.

TRAVELLING on the continent is not, generally speaking, so rapid as in England. The roads are not inferior to ours, but the carriages are heavier and the horses not in so good condition; therefore it is seldom that a diligence or private carriage goes much more than six miles an hour. This rate of speed suits the wishes of continental people, who are rarely in a hurry about anything—the idea of a business-value for time being scarcely known amongst them. An Englishman chafes under it; but it is to little purpose, for it is scarcely possible to induce any driver or conductor to make haste. The same moderation of speed has been maintained in the railways. Sixteen miles an hour may be stated as the ordinary rate of progress in that mode of conveyance. One does not find so much as twenty except in Belgium, where business principles are more in vogue, but they may be presumed to be in some degree affected by English ideas.

It is not merely that movement is slow, but there are many impediments that cause a consumption of time. Continental people must have a great deal of accounting about everything. The *comptoir* is always a most conspicuous and important part of a business establishment. Billets charged with minute specifications have to be taken out beforehand for even trifling distances by an omnibus. You may come at the moment of starting, find an empty place, and offer the money; but that won't do. You must walk into a *bureau*, and go through the formality of taking out a ticket. So it is at railway-stations. The simplicity of the ordinary transaction in England—the purchase of a ticket at the counter perhaps three minutes before the hour of starting—is totally inconceivable to our friends abroad. You probably are sent away from your hotel an hour before the time of starting, and you will find it well to be as near this time beforehand as possible. On arriving, you have to engage and fee one of the railway porters to take your luggage to a *comptoir*, that it may be weighed; for in most places every pound of it has to be paid for, and nowhere is it wholly free. You have to go to this place, full of coarse bustle and noise, and wait till your turn for weighing arrives, when your porter announces its weight, and hands you a billet expressive of that particular, and of the appropriate charge, together with the number put upon the various packages as a guidance to your ultimately claiming them at the end of your journey. You then go to another *bureau* and take out your personal billet. Sometimes you are required to take out the personal billet first, and as a necessary prelimi-

nary to getting your baggage expedited. This happens where, as an essential preliminary to getting a billet of either kind, you have yet another piece of business to transact—namely, to go through an office where your passport is inspected, or at least to shew that document to a gendarme standing by. We lately found it so in Prussia, in Saxony, and in the Austrian dominions. Now, all these matters require some time; for, be it observed, a billet is not stamped as with us. It has to be partly written, the writing has to be dried by sand (a thing nearly obsolete in English stationery, but in universal use abroad), and it has also to be cut by scissors out of a book. The slow, pedantic formality of the whole affair is very trying to an Englishman's impatient temper; but he cannot help himself. After all, he has to go to the *salle* or waiting-room appropriate to the particular class indicated in his ticket (shewing his ticket before he is allowed to enter), and there remain till the proper moment when the doors will be thrown open, and the travellers allowed to take their places in the carriages. And this is apt to be a trying part of the business to an Englishwoman, as in Germany she will scarcely fail to find every man present with a cigar or pipe in his mouth, the room full accordingly of smoke, and the floor in a state disgustingly filthy. On the whole, it is a most disagreeable half-hour or three-quarters which it requires to allow a traveller to start on a continental railway journey. When it is for a short distance, so much time may well be much grudged. We lately went from Verona to Mantua, in order to look on those Mincio-laved fields where Virgil once lived, and which one still associates with the idea of his *Melibœuses* and *Daphnes*. The railway journey required strictly one hour, but it was made nearly three by the omnibus journeys to and from stations, the preliminary, and the consequent formalities. Our passport was examined both in leaving Verona and in entering Mantua. One fact in the return is sufficient to shew the small value set upon time in that part of the world: the omnibuses commenced their round of the hotels in Mantua for the taking up of passengers at half-past four, and were off on their way out of town at a quarter to five, for a train which was to start from the station—a mile and a half distant—at six. This was more time than was strictly necessary; but the reason appeared, when we found the omnibuses in time to receive and carry back to Mantua the passengers who came in by a train from Verona at about twenty minutes past five!

On the other hand, it must be admitted that the formality and deliberation with which the continental railways are managed are attended by an apparent safety to the passengers. Accidents are comparatively

rare on these railways. The continentalist is not in a hurry, and he does not object to being treated with a kind of military rigour by the officials: he appears thus to benefit in point of security for life and limb. The Englishman grudges to misspend a minute, and he occasionally gets smashed. It is now indeed generally asserted that the appalling frequency of railway accidents in England is owing chiefly, if not solely, to the insufficiency of attendance or to culpable negligence; but we can entertain no doubt that, other things being equal, the ratio of accidents must coincide in some degree with the hurry of the procedure. One feels on a continental railway that he is treated like a slave, or perhaps it would be more correct to say that he is treated like a *parcel*; but he also feels that he is all but certain of coming safe to his journey's end.

Passports have been touched upon. It is a terrible business to the English continental traveller, forming a subject of anxiety and trouble, and a cause of expense at every place he comes to. He never can be safe for a moment without it; and yet it must occasionally be parted with in order to be examined by the police. Returning to Berlin from a forenoon's visit to Potsdam, we lately found a cordon of soldiers drawn up across the platform, and all the passengers had to shew their passports before being allowed to leave the station. Our own passport being at this time in the hands of the police, we should probably have been in some difficulty here had it not been for our *commissionnaire*, who contrived to make his own certificate pass for us also. What would our London holiday-makers think if they could not visit Windsor without a similar detention on their return to the Paddington station? The strictness is at present greatest in the Austrian dominions. At Vienna we wished to go to Presburg to visit an English friend who lives there. It is a two hours' journey; but it cost us a considerable part of the previous day to make two attendances at the police-office, in order to give the explanations necessary before obtaining permission to go. Being subsequently too late in our application at the police-office for our passport *visé* for Trieste, we had to wait an extra day in Vienna in order to obtain the document. By a similar oversight, the consequence of misunderstanding an official, we had to wait a day in Trieste before getting permission to go to Venice. Thus we lost two days out of five through this troublesome formality—a considerable loss in money to a party of three persons, but a greater loss in tedium and ill-humour. Such things are great drawbacks from the pleasures of a continental journey. In the Austrian railways one or two officers wearing their swords come in at the second-last station, and before the final stoppage of the train go through the carriages from end to end, examining the passports of the passengers. The poor passengers always appeared to us to have a sadly cowed look while under this process. It was a particularly painful spectacle in Hungary and Lombardy, where everybody knows that the people are kept down purely by military force. We may here remark that the Austrian railways are altogether in the hands of the government, which contemplates a primary utility for them as means of transporting troops through its disaffected provinces. The filling up of a space, where a mountainous tract has to be crossed, is a stupendous piece of railway engineering. In passing along in the omnibuses, which at present form a provisional mode of transport, one sees the sections and bridgings for the line going on at an aerial height on the rough, woody mountain-side, and reflects how powerful must be the motive which compels a government notoriously embarrassed to push on so expensive a work. Meanwhile the unrailed intervals of the space are all furnished with electric lines for the communication of intelligence. It is curious to see the poles stretching across a moorland tract where there is no railway, and

sometimes, for the sake of short cuts, not very near to the post-road.

There is one comfort pretty general on the continent for which the traveller feels himself in a great measure indebted to the rigid system of administrative discipline by which so many matters are conducted: we allude to the street carriages, which are almost everywhere under such regulations that attempts to overcharge are nearly prevented. The one arrangement above all others conducive to this good end is, making the charge depend on time. Obviously, while there may be great doubt about the distance which a street carriage has travelled, there need be none about the time occupied in the course. We accordingly found in the cities where this plan prevails, that we could settle with the drivers of street carriages in an amicable spirit and without an approach to dispute, thus avoiding that worry to which every stranger in our English cities is subjected in dealing with that class of men. We would instance Berlin and Baden-Baden as places where the time-system, with some little fortification from other regulations, works particularly well. Is it beyond hope that a system founded on the best continental experience could be introduced in England? We hardly know any department of public service in which there is more need for reform than this. In Berlin the charge for one or two persons by a one-horse carriage is sixpence for a quarter of an hour, and one-and-sixpence for an hour. An additional person pays a half more.

The physical distinction between the continent and England which most strikes a traveller is with respect to the atmosphere. A native of our cloudy island feels exhilarated by the pure, dry, blue air which envelops him abroad. There is a lustrous brightness over even city objects which one never sees at home. We feel the air to be a fine medium in which we are bathing—a novel and most pleasing sensation. It is distressing in central Europe to observe the extent to which, in towns, the natives persist in drugging their beautiful atmosphere with tobacco-smoke. The German seems as if he would never willingly part with his pipe or cigar. He indulges his propensity without delicacy towards women or strangers—at all hours and seasons: we have seen him keep the pipe in his mouth in situations of difficulty, or while engaged in work, when an Englishman would have deemed it necessary to be free of all encumbrances whatever. While conversing with him you feel his breath like the air from an old disused chimney, as if his windpipe were cased with ancient soot all the way down. Throughout Austria you can enter no public carriage where you are safe from the persecution of tobacco smoke, nor can you anywhere secure an exemption from it in favour of any ladies in your charge. Political feeling has lately effected in Lombardy a reform which probably refinement could never have accomplished—the people having generally abandoned the use of tobacco out of hatred for the government, which derives a revenue from the article. Would that some similar gust of sentiment would banish the nuisance from other dominions of the House of Hapsburg! One quickly perceives how smoking accords with the deliberate habits of the German. Being never in a hurry, he has time to smoke; and being devoted to smoking, he can do nothing expeditiously. It is a prominent feature of continental life all through the season of travel, that multitudes of well-dressed men are continually seen sitting in the open air in front of the establishments called *cafés*. They generally content themselves with some very innocent liquor—coffee or *eau sucrée*; and thus provided, with a newspaper, and a few neighbours to converse with, they will sit for hours, as if they had no business to call them elsewhere. We at one time felt pleased with the sight of so many people making themselves happy with such simple things;

but we have latterly begun to think the custom not very creditable. To be contented with an amusement so puerile, so insipid, and so slow, marks, we should say, some default in the popular mind. The men who spend much of their time in this way must to some extent neglect their affairs. They can have little time besides for improving their minds by study. They cannot be a progressive people. There is a vicious circle in politics. If a people has no share in ruling, its mental calibre becomes or remains contracted; and while its mental calibre is contracted, it cannot be fit for any share in the government. To this total inaptitude and inexperience in which the continental nations have hitherto been kept by their governments—as if it were necessary to treat men in all situations and throughout all time as children—must mainly be attributed the sad failure of the democratic movement all over Europe in 1848-49, by which, to all appearance, improvement has been put back for a generation. But this is rather a serious corollary to draw from a few remarks on the custom of dawdling over *eau sucrée*; and as our rôle is not politics, it would perhaps be best to say no more on the subject.

One general remark that arises in our minds from a pretty long continental excursion is, that though there is much to be pleased with in what one eats and drinks and hears and sees and feels when abroad, there is yet a felicity in the condition of England which may well make an Englishman content with his own country. We have a kindly regard for all neighbouring countries and people, and are no bigots on any point; but commend us after all to the tight little island!

#### RAMBLES IN SEARCH OF WILD-FLOWERS.

OCTOBER.

I MUST now beg to introduce those who have been so far companions in my rambles to some friends who had at this time joined me in my solitude, and who will accompany us in a walk to the bogs where I formerly found the *Equisetum sylvaticum*. These were a beloved brother, who had come to pass a day or two with me, and his intelligent and merry little son, of about eleven years old, who had accompanied him; and as if to make all things around me seem bright and joyous, my own dear invalid charge had sufficiently recovered to be able, under certain restrictions, to share our pleasure, and to go at least part of the way with us. The special object of this ramble was to shew to the new-comers the beautiful sight of the flowering fern (*Osmunda regalis*), now just in perfection.

It was a glowing day—one of those very hot mornings which sometimes burst forth to gild the autumn; yet, as we ascended the hill and crossed the heath, the never-failing sea-breeze relieved the ardent heat, so as to enable us much to enjoy our walk, as we lingered on our way—*lionising* the ground as we went—now pointing out to our interested friends the different beauties of the scenery, and the exquisite views of the deep-blue sea, which from time to time opened on us; and then diversifying the scene by eating some blackberries, or searching out relics of such rare plants as still remained, spreading their almost faded beauties among the decaying leaves—in like manner as we sometimes see a few of those gems of person or mind which have adorned youth outliving the wear and tear of the world, and embellishing the latter years of the life of their possessor. But as the relics of summer flowers are chiefly found in sheltered and calm nooks, where neither sun nor wind has had full power, so are those lingering ornaments of body or mind most frequently found in

those whose lot has been cast in the more sequestered paths of life—where nature has not been stifled by art, and the free course of her blossoming neither forced by the glare of worldly adulation and prosperity, nor checked by the biting blasts of undue discouragement.

Chatting, botanising, and berry-eating, we pursued our way, a happy group, once more down the sloping field, where the cotton-grass still displayed its snowy tassels of fibre, and the cross-leaved and purple heaths, and the silvery spikes of the pale-lilac ling, still decked the ground; and now I had the pleasure of finding the pretty white beak-rush (*Rhynchospora alba*), which grew in profusion all over the face of this bog, though wholly unknown in either of the others in the neighbourhood. The white beak-rush is not a true rush, and belongs not to the *N. O. Juncaceae*, in which real rushes are placed, but to the *Cyperaceae*, and has but half the number of stamens and pistils which are to be found in a *juncus*. It is an elegant little thing. The spikelets of white flowers are collected so as to form a level surface at the summit, and spring from a large floral leaf which overtops the head of flowers; the leaves are tapering and linear, extremely elegant and delicate in their growth, rising erect with a graceful curve, and being very slight and sharp-pointed. The whole plant is almost white; and the root, which generally comes out of the soft, boggy ground at the least pull, is a pretty tube with delicate fibres hanging from it, and looking almost like a small bulb. The bog now displays a great variety of different kinds of *carex*, *rush*, and *plantains*, but it is very wet; and we find that the fatigue of crossing it, and proceeding to the marsh in search of the *Osmunda*, would be too much for the strength of my feeble young charge. We were loath to leave him, but his cheerful good-humour made all easy; so, settling him on a pleasant bank under the copious shade of a lofty oak, and providing him with a store of rushes to plait, we left him with his little friend to supply him with fresh materials for his work, and amuse him with his chat, and pushed briskly on to the enclosure, which we found now fairly overgrown with the beautiful little arborescent sterile spikes of the *Equisetum sylvaticum*, and turning to the right, we soon stood directly in front of the object of our pursuit.

But before entering on the description of any one individual of that tribe, so full of interest, so curiously and beautifully diversified in form and structure, though forming such a united and well-defined family—I mean the fern tribe—it may be as well to examine a little in detail what are the most marked characteristics by which we may readily know a fern from any other plant; and in so doing we shall be led to observe how wonderful and varied are the works of God, and to remark fresh instances of that love which provides for his creatures so many sources of interest and enjoyment, and so many wonderful and beautiful objects for their admiring study. The most clear and simple definition of a fern that I have seen is that given in Macgillivray's condensation of Withering's arrangement of British plants—a little work so easy to understand, so portable, and so cheap, that I would strongly recommend it to any one who wishes easily to make out the names of any flowers or plants he may meet with—it is this: 'A plant consisting of a frond (leaf) with dorsal or terminal fructification.' Whenever you meet with a leaf bearing on its under side roughish dark-coloured spots, which you find on investigation contain seeds, you may be sure—whether it is small or large, or whatever may be its shape—that it is a fern of some kind or other. But there are some plants which, though classed by most botanists as ferns, and belonging to the *N. O. Filices*, are yet not true ferns, nor quite so



easily discerned to be of that order. Of these the *Osmunda*, which bears its fruit on a terminal spike, instead of at the back of the leaf, is one; a second is the moonwort (*Botrychium lunaria*), a pretty little plant, from about three to six inches in height, the rachis or stem of which is divided into two parts—a pinnate leafy portion, and a spike of fructification. This grows in many parts of England, and is found also, though more sparingly, in Wales, Scotland, and Ireland. Magical properties were formerly attributed to it. A third kind is the adder's tongue (*Ophioglossum vulgare*), also more abundant in England than in the other divisions of Great Britain: this consists of a single, undivided, and sharp-pointed frond, rising so as to form a shield for a spike of fruit which springs from the same hollow rachis or stem. After this spike begins to mature, it grows so as to overtop the leaf, which, when young, formed its shelter; and when perfect, stands as much above the frond as below it, displaying a double row of thecae or capsules, which, when the seed is ripe, open transversely, gape widely, and allow the seed to be scattered by the winds. When this plant gets abundant it is considered a serious injury to the crop of grass, as it often covers acres of ground. These three are the only British plants which, though called ferns, do not bear their fruit on some part of the back of the leaf.

Ferns differ widely in their size, form, and the situation where they grow. There are some of which the fronds are three or more feet in length, elegantly cut and divided—as the bracken (*Pteris aquilina*), the shield ferns, &c. There are others where the leaf is straight at the edge, and uncut, from three or four inches to a foot or more in length: of these is the elegant glossy hart's tongue (*Scolopendrium vulgare*), so abundant around fountains and spring-heads, as well as drooping in huge clusters on the hedges in shady places, of which Dioscorides tells us that, 'being drunke in wine, it is a remedie against the bitings of serpentes.' Then there is the polypody, formed of leaves cut in even to the very midrib with alternate divisions, the back of its leaf ornamented by a double row of yellow, bead-like thecae, and growing in beautiful tufts in all directions. From the top of old walls, out of the fissures of aged oaks, or on the surface of the weather-beaten rock, there the year through may be found the graceful polypody in drooping clusters; for the fronds thrown up in May and June are matured by September, and retain their vigour and beauty until those of the succeeding year make their appearance. But to give an idea of half the varieties of ferns which exist even in these islands would be impossible in the limited space which I can allot to that purpose: it must therefore suffice to say, that though there are some species so large as I have before stated, there are others most diminutive; that whilst some sorts may be found on the crests of the loftiest mountains, there are others which luxuriate alone in the sheltered woods and lanes which intersect the land; some, such as many of the spleenworts (*Aspleniums*), abounding on old walls, ruins, and churches, where, mixed with the scaly-leaved hart's tongue (*Ceterach officinarum*)—so rare in the midland and northern counties, though so very plentiful in the south-western—they start from beds of the driest mortar, and enamel the stonework with their brilliant verdure; whilst others no less lovely will flourish only where the spray of the waterfall ceaselessly drops on them, keeping them continually in a dripping state.

There is scarcely a locality where ferns of some kind are not found, and there is no season of the year when you may not gather them in all their brightness. From the frozen regions of the north to the flowery plains of the south, in the frigid and in the torrid zones, these beautiful plants are indigenous, and many of them have valuable medical properties. The leaves contain in many instances a thick astringent mucilage, with

other matter, on which account many are considered pectoral and lenitive. Capillairo is so called from being prepared from the *Adiantum capillus veneris*, a plant of pectoral and astringent qualities; and *Osmunda regalis* has been employed successfully for the rickets. The common bracken (*Pteris aquilina*) and the male shield-fern (*Aspidium filix mas*) have even been used in the manufacture of beer—at least so Lindley states, and we cannot have better authority—as *Aspidium fragrans* has been as a substitute for tea. The people of Tasmania roast and eat the root of one species of fern for bread with the flesh of the kangaroo.

But I must not allow myself to dwell longer on the subject of ferns in general; but having given a few of the leading characteristics of the tribe, we must now return to the little enclosure where the *Osmunda regalis* awaits us. The generic name of this family, *Osmunda*, is said to be of northern origin, and to be so named on account of its potency in medicine. Osmundr was one of the names of Thor, a Celtic divinity; and *mund* in Anglo-Saxon is expressive of force or power. It is the finest of all our species of British ferns, and indeed there was no need of minute investigation in seeking for it: high-arching over our heads rose the proud fronds of this 'flower-crowned prince of English ferns.' The whole hedge was a mass of fronds—some in full fruit, others robed only in the fairy green, which decks the sterile branches, absolutely glittering with beauty, and rising from the foot to the crown of the hedge in massive luxuriance; the upper ones, standing high above our heads, being in themselves both sterile and fertile fronds, from six to eight feet in length, and raised on a bank some feet high, which they amply clothed; indeed they so intersected the whole hedge for some yards of its length as to appear to form its main substance.

If you, my reader, have ever felt that sort of enthusiastic feeling which leads you to a sort of personal appropriation of the scenery or objects of nature or art which happen to be near your dwelling, making it all seem as if it were really your own, and you yourself were answerable for its making a good appearance, and justifying your description of its beauties, you will perhaps be able to enter into the proud feeling of exultant success which possessed me when standing before this splendid group of foliage I saw at a glance that it more than answered the expectation I had raised in the mind of my companion, and observed the pleasure with which he selected two or three of the giant fronds, traced the stems to the point where they sprung from the rhizoma—the part between the stem, or rachis, and the root—and cut them. One measured more than seven feet, and the spike of fruit was, I should say, not less than twelve or fourteen inches in length, the rest falling little short of like dimensions. The *Osmunda regalis* differs from the usual habit of others of its order in its mode of fructification, which approaches more nearly to that of the *Equisetaceae*, its thecae or seed-vessels being gathered into a terminal spike, or rather cluster of spikes, instead of being, as I have said is usual with most ferns, disposed on the under side of the leaflets. The frond of the *Osmunda* is linear and pinnate, there being four or five pair of pinnae or leaflets, exquisitely veined, and of a clear, semi-transparent green of a remarkably vivid tint. The apex or point of the fertile frond is composed of its spikes of fruit, whilst that of the sterile bears green leaflets to the summit. It is not unusual to find some of the pinna towards the base of the spike only partially converted into thecae, and presenting an edge of green to view. This arises from the thecae being borne on the margin of contracted leaves. Old Gerarde, in his Herbarium, calls it 'Osmund the waterman.' Why, I know not, for I have not been able to trace the reason, though I do not doubt that there must have been some legend connected with the plant

which led to the name. He says of it: 'The root is great and thick, folded, and covered over with many scales and interlacing roots, having in the middle of the great and hard woody part thereof some small whiteness, which has been called the heart of Osmund the waterman. The root, and especially the heart or middle part thereof, boyled or else stamped, and taken with some kinde of liquor, is thought to be good for those that are wounded, dry-beaten, or bruised—that have fallen from some high place; and for the same cause the empiricks doe put it in decoctions, which the later physicians doe call wound-drinkes. Some take it to be so effectual and of so greete a vertue that it can dissolve cluttered blood remaining in any inward part of the body, and that it alsoe can expell or drive it out by the wound.'

It is exceedingly difficult to get this 'great and thick root' out from the bog in which it grows. A collector gave me an amusing account of the manner in which he had long in vain assailed it, as, in consequence of there being no resistance in the soil, his spade failed to act on the root, and gave way under the pressure—a result likely to overthrow him in the mire. He, however, succeeded at last in securing a piece by getting the spade fairly under the root, and so lifting it out, conveyed it safe to his fernery, where, with some two dozen other species, collected from various parts of England, it was happily flourishing and bearing its fruit a year after its removal. This fern, though usually erect in its growth, sometimes, when it grows near the water's edge, assumes a pendent character. Newman says: 'I noticed a beautiful instance of this when at Killarney, where it completely fringes the river between the lakes, and certainly forms a most prominent feature in that lovely but neglected portion of Killarney's famed scenery. So altered is the usual character of this fern, that its long fronds arch gracefully over, and dip their masses of seed in the crystal water; whilst the saucy coots, from beneath the canopy it affords them, gaze fearlessly on the visitors who are continually passing by.' The whole aspect of the plant is most noble and majestic. Hooker records that Mr Stewart Murray measured a tuft of its fronds on the banks of the Clyde, which, from the base to the apex, measured eleven feet and a half in height. Impressions of the leaves of *Osmunda* are, according to Withering, frequent in the nodules of ironstone found in Coalbrookdale, Salop. He says it is the only species of an indigenous vegetable which he has ever discovered in a fossil state; adding, that all the other impressions of filices which he has found on ironstone seem to be those of American plants; but remarking, however, that *Osmunda* is also a native of Virginia. He tells us a curious fact—namely, that 'this plant, though before not to be found for many miles around Birmingham, in the year 1802 appeared on an archery butt on Mosley Common, artificially raised with mud from a deep pit, in which the seeds had probably lain for a length of time. It continued to flourish so long as the butt remained.'

The singular phenomena which exist connected with the vegetative power in seeds require but observation to strike every mind with wonder and admiration. 'Some,' says Withering, 'lose their vital principle by being kept out of the ground even for a short time after ripening; whilst others may be sent round the world, and exposed to every vicissitude of climate, or even be buried for ages in the earth, and yet vegetate with the first favourable opportunity.' Some will spring up on any soil or in any aspect; whilst others wait, lying dormant till some soil or rooting-place to which they have affinity is presented to them, when they at once put forth their energies, and become vigorous plants. Wheat, taken from the wrappings of mummies 3000 years old, has been known to vegetate freely. New cuttings for railroads or other purposes, to be speedily

covered with plants of species before unknown in their neighbourhood, as in the cuttings at Box, near Bath, plants of the brittle fern (*Cystopteris fragilis*) were found, as if sprung from seeds which had lain dormant perhaps for ages—that fern not being, as I have been told, before known in that locality. The *Osmunda* seems to be widely distributed over the kingdom, yet it is not generally well known. Probably the fact of its growing only in bog-earth may account for this, as few people are in the habit of visiting wet bogs; yet it is well worth while to do so, if only for the sake of becoming acquainted with this noble plant. It is said that Sir Walter Scott, when visiting Killarney, seemed unmoved and unadmirable until coming to a part of the scenery where this fern abounds and takes a drooping character, gracefully arching in large tufts over the water, and forming a shelter for many aquatic birds, he stopped the boatmen, and exclaimed—'This is worth coming to see!' The fronds when they first appear are of a salmon hue, and, until matured, continue somewhat of a reddish colour. They are of very rapid growth, and each root bears from six to twelve fronds, two or three of which would form an ample shade from the sun for a tall man; and, indeed, we ourselves found those we had gathered most useful for that purpose as we walked homewards.

We now, having secured our main object, began to think of returning to those whom we had left on the other side the bog; but as we retraced our steps, we found other objects of interest. On the turfy banks of the hedges, rising from the sloping sides of ditches, on the ramparts of earth which separated the enclosures—all round us, feathering the ground with its elegant foliage of the most vivid green, we found that pretty and graceful fern, which, though generally distributed throughout our land, is much less frequent in the southern than in the northern counties, as indeed its name would indicate: as it is called the northern hard fern (*Lomaria spicata*.) Every fern has a root—a rhizoma—which is the part between the root and the stem, and which corresponds to the trunk in a tree, and is in fact that which in the tree-ferns of tropical countries forms the trunk—and a stem or rachis from which the leaflets spring. Now the roots in the hard fern are black, tough, and wiry; the rhizoma is tufted—that is, above ground—and hairy; the rachis of the fertile frond dark purple, smooth, and shining; whilst that of the sterile is green; the fertile frond is linear and pinnatifid—that is, once cut, and pointed at the apex. It grows very erect, and is often a foot and a half or more in length, the back being thickly loaded with capsules, lying so close together that none of the substance of the leaf is to be seen. The barren frond is not so erect, wider and shorter, of a brighter green, and wholly without capsules. The appearance of this and some other ferns would puzzle those who are not aware that some plants of that order produce both barren and fertile fronds from the same root and at the same time. The beautiful parsley-leaved fern (*Allosorus crispus*), which so richly decorates those masses of stone which hang about the mountains in the Lake and other northern districts, and may be found springing from the crevices in old stone-walls, is one in which the fertile and barren spikes are found at the same time and on the same root; and the beautiful maiden-hair (*Adiantum capillus veneris*), so rare in England, is another. This most elegant species is to be found at Ilfracombe, in Devonshire, and in two or three spots in Cornwall. I have also heard of plants being found near Brixham, in South Devon; but the inconsiderateness of collectors has been such, that where it used to grow abundantly it is now difficult to find specimens. In the South Isles of Arran it, however, abounds to such an extent that it is said the inhabitants gather it and use it as tea.

And so, after a lengthened ramble, combining much enjoyment with the attainment of some information

and a grand display of specimens, we reach our home in safety, none of our party being injured by the efforts they had made, and we rustics only regretting that such cheering and intellectual companionship so seldom shared and enlivened our country walks.

### WILD SPORTS OF THE EAST.

THE angling season begins in London with the very first disappearance of frost and the first blush of blue sky in the heavens; and, with comparatively few exceptions, Sundays and holidays are the only days of sport. The young angler begins his career in the Surrey Canal, the Grand Junction Canal, or the New River, whichever happens to be nearest to the place of his abode. His first apparatus is a willow-wand, bought at the basketmaker's for a penny, and a roach-line for fivepence more. A sixpenny outfit satisfies his modest ambition; and thus equipped he sallies forth to feed—not the fishes—they he invariably frightens away—but himself, with the delusive hope of catching them. The blue-bottles have not yet left their winter quarters, and 'gentles' or maggots are not yet to be had; so he has recourse to kneaded bread or paste, hoping to beguile his prey with a vegetable diet. In order that the fishes may be duly apprised of the entertainment prepared for them, he crams his trousers-pockets with gravel, which he industriously scatters upon his float as it sails down the stream, doubtless impressed with the notion that the whole finny tribe within hearing will swarm beneath the stony shower to take their choice of the descending blessings, and finding his bait among them, give it the preference, and swallow it as a matter of course. The theory seems a very plausible one; but we cannot say that in practice, though witnessing it a thousand times, we ever saw it succeed. For the sake of something like an estimate of the amount of success among the juvenile anglers of this class, we lately watched the operations of a group of nearly thirty of them for two hours, but failed in deriving any data for a calculation, as not a fin appeared above water the whole time. With the exception of a few 'stunnin' bites,' and one 'rippin' wallopper,' which was proclaimed to have carried off a boy's hook, there was no indication of sport beyond that afforded by the party themselves.

When the sun, bountiful to sportsmen, begins, as Shakespeare has it, 'to breed maggots in a dead dog,' a new and superior race of anglers appears upon the margin of the waters. The dead dogs then have their day, and are now carefully collected from holes and corners by the makers and venders of fishing-tackle, and comfortably swaddled in bran, where they lie till their bones are white, originating 'gentles' through the live-long summer for the use of the devotees of angling. Now we see something like tackle deserving the name: capitalists who think nothing of a crown, ay, or a pound either, by way of outfit; rods of real bamboo, straight as an arrow, and fifteen or twenty feet long; floats of porcupine quill, and lines of China twist; bait-boxes, fish-cans, and belted baskets, and all the paraphernalia of the contemplative recreation appear upon the banks; but still no fish, or nothing larger than what a half-pound trout would gobble up in his prowling through some country stream for breakfast. All these mighty preparations are made against a generation among which a full-sized sprat would rank as a triton among the minnows. Not one Cockney sportsman in ten thousand has ever seen a trout alive, and would perhaps be as likely to be pulled into the water by one of a couple of pounds' weight as to pull the fish out were he by any miracle doomed to the terrible alternative.

The oriental's enthusiasm for the sport has no sort of relation to his success. We met Charley Braggs in our last Sunday-evening's walk returning from his

day's amusement. Now Charley is a machine-man in the — Printing-office, and having put the Sunday paper to bed at about two o'clock, instead of going home to his own after a week of unremitting toil, he had set off for Hornsey by moonlight, where, perching himself upon a bank, he had sat from three in the morning till seven at night, bobbing for small fry at a bend in the New River. His basket was well stuffed—with grass; among which he pointed exultingly to four or five little silvery victims, whose united weight would have kicked the beam against a quarter of a pound. And yet Charley thought himself successful; and so he was in comparison with the average of New-River anglers.

But we must ascend in the scale in order to do fair justice to our subject, and take a glance at the angling establishments in the neighbourhood of London, where good-sized fish are really caught, or, as the phrase is, 'killed;' and where, in order that there may be no doubt about it, their skins are plentifully varnished and preserved as evidence of the fact. Upon the banks of the several rivers that empty themselves into the Thames at various points in the vicinity of London there are numerous establishments of this kind. We shall sketch one where we have before now passed a delicious day in the enjoyment of the *dolce far niente*, and which will serve very well as a sample of the whole.

We mount upon an omnibus, and driving four or five miles through the suburbs in a north-easterly direction, are set down at a turnpike-gate in a neat, tree-sprinkled village. Leaving the village to the west, we take the turnpike-road, which leads in a direct line to the river, where, at the distance of half a mile from the village, it is crossed by a substantial and handsome bridge. Traversing the bridge, we turn to the right after a passage of a few score paces, and enter, through neatly-trimmed walks, upon the grounds and gardens of a country inn. Covered seats and rustic alcoves—arbours, and quiet, snug, leafy retreats, abound in the gardens and grounds which abut upon the river's brink. The water foams and dashes with the unceasing noise of a cataract over a series of wooden dams, erected to divert the main current into a new channel for the purposes of navigation—the old bed of the river being that rented by the proprietor of the inn, and by him strictly preserved for the delectation of his patrons, the amateur anglers of the metropolis. Let us enter the house, and proceeding up stairs to the piscatory sanctum, look around us while we impinge upon a bottle of the landlord's unexceptionable ale. Here we are in the very paradise of the London anglers, and surrounded with the trophies of their cunning and patience, ranged in glass-cases, and labelled with the weight of the immortalised victims and the names of their fortunate captors. Here it is recorded, for the instruction of future generations, that a gudgeon of seven inches three-eighths in length, and five ounces ten drachms in weight, was captured by the redoubtable Dubbs of Tooley Street, on the 6th of August 1839; and though Dubbs himself, for aught we know, may long since have been gathered to his fathers, the wide-mouthed witness of the fact, the gudgeon himself, still hangs in the centre of his glass-case, suspended like Mohammed's coffin between heaven and earth, to bear perpetual testimony to his prowess. Yonder is a perch of three pounds caught by Stubbs of Little Britain; and above it a marvelously chubby chub, caught by Bubb of the street called Grub. These memorials of past achievements no doubt have their due influence, and urge the rising heroes of the angle to emulate their great forerunners. One whole side of the dining-room you see is parcelled out in lockers large enough to contain the necessary tackle and apparatus; and each locker is neatly painted, and bears the name of the amateur to whom the contents belong. These—and their number is not small—are the regular



subscribing members of the angling fraternity; and here on every Sunday throughout the summer, unless the weather be very bad indeed, they muster strong, often arriving while the dew is yet on the grass, and pursue their silent pleasures till dinner, steaming on the table at two o'clock, calls them together to report progress and recruit their strength.

The conversation on these occasions is characteristic and technical, and altogether fishy.

'Ha, Bubbs!' says Stubbs; 'shake a fin, old trout. What's the cheese? You don't look very fresh about the gills to-day.'

'Why,' responds Bubbs, 'you see I started afore light, and had but a scaly breakfast—not quite the thing in the ground-bait, you see. I'll be all right as a roach after I've nibbled a bit, I daresay.' Happy the man who at the dinner-table can display to the view of his admiring comrades some fish of mark—some roach of ten, or chub of twenty ounces. Old exploits are gone over for the hundredth time, with added particulars at every repetition. Baits are overhauled and discussed along with the brandy and water. Moss-crammed bags, where blood-worms, dung-worms, lobes, and lance-tails are kept to scour, are ransacked for specimens, and notes and maggots are compared, and much finny and vermic lore is elicited from the veterans of the silent art. The dinner and grog being duly honoured, the rod is again resumed beneath the shadowy shelter of the trees on the river's brink; and long after the gloom of night has descended upon the gurgling stream the brethren of the angle in populous silence pursue their labours. It is now seven years since friend Bubbs caught his big chub: the monster fish rose at his fly full sixty feet off, on the opposite side of the stream, where there is an eddy of the current rebounding from your projecting piles. It was the work of an hour—the hour of Bubbs's life—to bring the 'walloping gentleman' safe to land; and ever since, throughout every Sunday and holiday of the fishing season, has Bubbs been lashing away at the water with his whipping-rod and fifty yards of line, in the fond expectation of catching another to match him. 'Good-luck to your fishing!' say we. We cannot wait for the next bite, but must be off to see what the punters are about in the Thames.

'Patience in a Punt' is the title of an old caricature, representing the 'elderly gentleman' of hat-and-wig notoriety seated on a dilapidated chair in a flat-bottomed boat during the pelting of a pitiless storm, from which he is but partially sheltered by the skeleton of an umbrella, and, with eyes intent on his float, waiting for a bite. The picture is as applicable at the present hour to the class for whom it was intended as it was when published forty years ago. The punt is a nondescript kind of boat, with perpendicular sides and square ends. The fishing-houses on the banks of the Thames—of which there are plenty on both sides of the river, from Putney to Kingston, and beyond—are abundantly provided with these boats, in which the angler sits upon a chair, and generally baits for barbel, the only fish in the waters near London, with the exception of the pike, which, from the unwillingness he manifests to leave his native element, can be said to yield anything like sport in the catching. In some parts of the river near Twickenham they are exceedingly plentiful at times, and thirty or forty pounds' weight of them are not unfrequently caught in a day by a single rod. There is one thing against them, however, and that is, that they are worse than good for nothing. They hardly deserve the name of fish, being a species of mud vermin armed with snouts, and they taste of earth to a degree perfectly nauseous. People every season die through eating them, yet they are eagerly sought after, and an immense amount of time and expense is annually thrown away in their capture. The virtue of patience in connection with

punt-fishing is exemplified in waiting day after day half the season through before you make acquaintance with a single barbel. These unsavoury creatures herd together in swarms, and migrate from place to place, seeking a new feeding-ground when the old one is exhausted, and seldom staying long in one spot. As it is never possible to tell where these herds of river swine are lying with their snouts in the mud, you may plant your punt fifty times before you light upon a swarm, and thus cultivate your patience to the highest pitch of perfection.

In conjunction with the barbel-fishing in the Thames we may notice the bream-fishing in the different docks. It seems an odd thing that there should be any connection between the corn-laws and fishing for bream; yet a connection there certainly is. Certain of the docks appropriated for the reception and unloading of vessels freighted with grain became gradually well stocked with this particular fish, which thrives well upon a bread diet. Corn that from long hoarding under a high duty had become weaviled and worthless, was frequently thrown overboard, and that in vast quantities; and the consequence was, that enormous specimens of full-fed, aldermanic-looking bream were occasionally lugged forth to the light by the amateur anglers of the docks. We have seen them hauled up to the surface from a depth of twenty feet, looming through the green water like the broad, white waistcoat of an alderman through the reek of a civic feast. Apparently too fat to wag their tails, they dangled supine upon the treacherous hook, and only winking a bleared eye under the unwelcome light of day, 'gave up their quiet being' without a struggle.

In walking about the streets of London one is struck with the singularly great proportion of fishing-tackle shops taken in connection with the actual requirements of the population. There are some districts literally crammed with them—quiet, retired spots generally, where the traffic in other things is small, and the passers-by comparatively few. The key to this apparent riddle will be found in the fact, that the London makers supply the greater part of the kingdom—that nearly the whole of the fresh-water fishing-tackle of England is the produce of London manufactories. The harvest of these tradesmen is of course the summer season, and they spare no pains to make it as profitable as may be. At any of these shops you may purchase liberty to fish in private ponds or streams, situated, some of them, in distant counties, and contract for board and lodging at a moderate rate, or at any rate you choose, during your stay.

But we must proceed summarily to notice the winter field-sports of the indigenous Cockney with dog and gun, or with gun and no dog, as it may happen. Of this class of sportsmen there is no variety: the species is one and the same, and you might almost fancy it is the same individual you meet with everywhere, turn your face in what direction you will out of town on a Sunday in winter. He is a sort of hybrid specimen, half-artisan, half-mendicant, with a dash of the area sneak. Unwashed, untrimmed, and you may be sure unlicensed, he saunters forth with his hands in his pockets; his gun, a long iron-barrelled, rusty old flint, balanced under his arm; while his unctuous rags flutter in the wind. He is followed at a little distance by a half-starved, unwilling whelp, which is too well acquainted with the vigour of his master's toe to venture his lean and lanky anatomy within kicking distance, and which cannot always be seduced by the combined allurements of oaths, whistlings, and peltings, to participate in the day's sport. He carries his powder and shot in his pocket, and measures the charge with the bowl of a tobacco-pipe; and his game is anything that flies or runs, from a crow to a water-rat. His impatience for sport seldom allows him to straggle farther than the brick-fields, which on all sides of London constitute the

line of demarcation between the country and the town. Here he loads his piece and his short pipe, and with the latter firmly gripped by his teeth, prowls among the half-baked bricks, waging war among the sparrows and wagtails unfortunate enough to come in his way. He is the terror of the cottagers and gardeners of the suburbs, and the admiration of a cluster of ragged urchins, who gather round him and do his despotism bidding with alacrity. He never aims at a bird on the wing; and never, if he can help it, pulls the trigger without first securing a convenient resting-place for his long barrel. With all these precautions he considers himself fortunate if he kills once out of three times; and all the dead sparrows he carries home cost him at least ten times their weight in lead. We have met him more than once in the custody of the policeman, marching off to the station for sending shot through cottage windows, or leaping garden-fences after maimed sparrows. It is fortunate for the public that his recreation is generally over early in the day. By one o'clock the public-house is open, and even though his ammunition be not by that time all shot away, as is generally the case, he cannot resist the vision of the pewter-pot, which rises before his imagination as the destined hour draws near. Sometimes a wild ambition seizes him: he will learn to shoot flying, and then you may perchance come upon him in some retired field under Highgate Hill, in company with some congenial spirit, furnished with a luckless pigeon tied by the leg, at which these considerate sportsmen fire by turns, as the miserable bird rises in the air to the length of the string. The last time we witnessed this delectable sport, the string was severed by the twentieth discharge, and the unwounded bird got clear off, to the mortal chagrin of the pair of brutes.

The purlieus of Whitechapel and some other districts of London are yet disgraced by the disgustingly-cruel and senseless exhibitions of dog-fights, badger-baitings, and rat-slaughters; in which latter spectacle of barbarity certain wretches in human shape, envious of the reputation of the celebrated dog Billy, have aspired to emulate his exploits, and are actually seen to enter the arena with a hundred or more live rats, which they are backed, or back themselves, to kill with their teeth alone in a given time! The cockpit, too, yet survives, and mains are fought in secret and out of ear-shot of the Society for the Suppression of Cruelty to Animals. These and similar brutalities, however—thanks to the dawn of a better feeling and a more enlightened self-respect among the lower orders—are very much on the wane, and it may be fairly hoped will hardly survive the present generation of Cockney sportsmen.

#### CONSPIRACY OF THE CLOCKS.

WHEN Cardinal Montalto assumed the tiara under the title of Sixtus V., he speedily threw off the disguise which had enveloped his former life, smoothed the wrinkles from his now proud forehead, raised his piercing eyes—heretofore cautiously veiled by their downcast lids—and made the astounded conclave know that in place of a docile instrument they had elected an inflexible master. Many glaring abuses existed in Rome, and these the new pope determined to reform. It was the custom for the nobles, whether foreigners or natives, to be escorted whenever they went out by a numerous body of pages, valets, soldiers, and followers of all kinds, armed, like their masters, to the teeth. Sometimes a noble's 'following' resembled an army rather than an escort; and it frequently happened that when two such parties met in a narrow street, a violent struggle for precedence would take place, and blood be freely shed by those who had had no previous cause of quarrel. Hence came the warlike meaning—which it

still retains—of the word *rencontre*. Sixtus V. resolved to put down this practice, and seized the opportunity of an unusually fierce combat taking place on Easter-day within the very precincts of St Peter's.

Next morning an official notice was posted on the city walls, prohibiting every noble without exception from being followed by more than twenty attendants. Every one also, of whatever degree, who should himself carry, or cause his people to carry, any sort of fire-arms (pocket-pistols being especially mentioned), should thereby incur the penalty of death. At this notice Pasquin jested, and the nobles laughed, but no one dared to indulge in bravado, until the following incident occurred.

Just after the promulgation of the pope's orders, Ranuccio Farnese, the only son of the Duke of Parma, arrived in Rome. His first care was to wait on the new pontiff; and being presented by his uncle, Cardinal Farnese, the young prince met the reception due to his rank and to his merit. Already his talents and courage gave promise of his becoming a worthy successor to his father; and the Roman nobles vied with each other in doing honour to the heir of one of the richest duchies in the peninsula. On the evening after his arrival he was invited by Prince Cesarini to a magnificent banquet. Wine flowed freely, and the night waxed late, when the gay guests began to discuss the recent edict of his holiness. Several wild young spirits, and amongst them Ranuccio, declared themselves ready to brave it openly. Next morning, however, when sobered by sleep, they all, with one exception, judged it expedient to forget their bravado. Ranuccio alone felt a strong desire to try conclusions with the pope. Although a feudatory of the holy see, he was not a Roman, and he was a prince. Sixtus V. would probably think twice before touching a head that was almost crowned. Besides, youths of twenty love adventure, and it is not every day that one can enjoy the pleasure of putting a pope in a dilemma. Ranuccio, in short, went to the Vatican and asked an audience of his holiness. It was immediately granted, and the prince, after having, according to the custom, knelt three times, managed adroitly to let fall at the very feet of Sixtus a pair of pistols loaded to the muzzle.

Such audacity could not go unpunished. Without a moment's hesitation the pope summoned his guards, and ordered them to arrest and convey to Fort St Angelo the son of the Duke of Parma, who had just condemned himself to death. War might be declared on the morrow; an outraged father might come, sword in hand, to demand the life and liberty of his son. What cared Sixtus? He was resolved to restore but a corpse.

The news spread quickly: so much audacity on one side and so much firmness on the other seemed almost incredible. Cardinal Farnese hastened to the Vatican, and, falling at the feet of the pope, with tears in his eyes pleaded his nephew's cause. He spoke of the youth of the culprit and the loyalty of his father, who was then in Flanders fighting the battles of the holy see. Ranuccio had been but two days in Rome—might he not fairly be supposed ignorant of the new enactment? Then he belonged to a powerful house, which it might not be prudent for even his holiness to offend; and, finally, he was closely related by blood to the late pope, Paul III.

The holy father's reply was cruelly decisive. 'The



law,' he said, 'makes no distinction: a criminal is a criminal, and nothing more. The vicegerent of God on earth, my justice, like His, must be impartial; nor dare I exercise clemency, which would be nothing but weakness.'

The cardinal bent his head and retired.

Besieged incessantly by fresh supplications from various influential quarters, the pope sent for Monsignor Angeli, the governor of Fort St Angelo. To him he gave imperative orders, that precisely at twenty-four o'clock\* that evening his illustrious prisoner's head should be struck off.

The governor returned to the castle, and signified to Ranuccio that he had but two hours to live. The young man laughed in his face, and began to eat his supper. He could not bring himself to believe that he, the heir-apparent of the Duke of Parma, could be seriously menaced with death by an obscure monk, whose only title to the pontificate seemed to have been his age and decrepitude. Yet speedily the threat seemed to him less worthy of derision, when he saw from his window a scaffold, bearing a hatchet and a block, in process of erection. But who can describe his dismay when his room was entered by a monk, who came to administer the last rites of the church, followed by the executioner, asking for his last orders!

Meantime Cardinal Farnese was not idle. He consulted with his friend, Count Olivares, ambassador from the court of Spain, and they resolved to attempt to obtain by stratagem what had been refused to their prayers. Two precious hours remained.

'Our only plan,' said the cardinal, 'is to stop the striking of all the public clocks in Rome! Meantime do you occupy Angeli's attention.'

His eminence possessed great influence in the city, and, moreover, the control of the public clocks belonged to his prerogative. At the appointed hour, as if by magic, time changed his noisy course into a silent flight. Two clocks, those of St Peter and St Angelo, were put back twenty minutes. Their proximity to the prison required this change, and the cardinal's authority secured the inviolable secrecy of every one concerned in the plot.

The execution was to be private; but Olivares, in his quality of ambassador, was permitted to remain with the governor. A single glance assured him that the clock was going right—that is to say, that it was quite wrong. Already the inner court was filled with soldiers under arms, and monks chanting the solemn 'Dies Irae.' Everything was prepared save the victim. Olivares was with Angeli, and a scene commenced at once terrible and burlesque. The ambassador, in order to gain time, began to converse on every imaginable subject, but the governor would not listen.

'My orders,' he said, 'are imperative. At the first stroke of the clock all will be over.'

'But the pope may change his mind.' Without replying the terrible Angeli walked impatiently up and down the room, watching for the striking of his clock. He called: a soldier appeared. 'Is all prepared?' All was prepared: the attendants, like their master, were only waiting for the hour.

'Tis strange,' muttered the governor. 'I should have thought'—

'At least,' interposed Olivares, 'if you will not delay, do not anticipate.' And monsignor resumed his hasty walk between the door and window, listening for the fatal sound which the faithful tongue of the clock still refused to utter.

Despite of the delay, however, the fatal hour approached. Ten minutes more, and Ranuccio's fate would be sealed.

Meanwhile the cardinal repaired to the pope. As he entered, Sixtus drew out his watch, and his eyes sparkled with revengeful joy. On the testimony of that unerring timepiece Ranuccio was already executed.

'What seek you?' asked his holiness.

'The body of my nephew, that I may convey it to Parma. At least let the unhappy boy repose in the tomb of his ancestors.'

'Did he die like a Christian?'

'Like a saint,' cried the cardinal, trembling at a moment's delay. Sixtus V. traced the following words: 'We order our governor of Fort St Angelo to deliver up to his eminence the body of Ranuccio Farnese.' Having sealed it with the pontifical signet, he gave it to the cardinal.

Arrived at the palace gates, Farnese, agitated between fear and hope, hastened to demand an entrance. A profound silence reigned within, broken only by the distant note of the 'De profundis.' He rushed towards the court. Was he too late?—had his stratagem succeeded? One look would decide. He raised his eyes—his nephew still lived. His neck bare, and his hands tied, he knelt beside the block, between a priest and the executioner, faintly uttering the words of his last prayer. Suddenly the chanting ceased; the cardinal flew towards the governor. Ere he could speak, his gestures and his countenance lied for him.

'A pardon!—a pardon!' exclaimed Olivares. The soldiers shouted. The executioner began to unloose his victim, when a sign from Angeli made him pause. The governor read and reread the missive.

'The body of Ranuccio Farnese!' he repeated: 'the criminal's name would suffice. Why these words, "The body of?"'

'What stops you?' cried the cardinal, at that perilous moment looking paler than his nephew.

'Read!' replied Angeli, handing him the pope's letter.

'Is that all?' said his eminence, forcing a smile and pointing to the clock. 'Look at the hour: it still wants two minutes of the time, and I received that paper from his holiness more than a quarter of an hour since.'

The governor bowed: the argument was irresistible. Ranuccio was given up to his deliverers. A carriage, with four fleet horses, waited outside the prison, and in a few moments the cardinal and the young prince were galloping along the road to Parma. Just then the clocks of Rome pealed forth in unison, as if rejoicing that by their judicious silence they had gained their master's cause. It might be well if lawyers in our day would sometimes follow their example.

Monsignor Angeli, as the chronicle relates, was rather astonished at the rapid flight of time after his prisoner's departure. In fact, the next hour seemed to him as short as its predecessor was long. This phenomenon, due to the simple system of compensation, was ascribed by him to the peaceful state of his conscience. Although inflexible in the discharge of what he esteemed his duty, he was in reality a kindhearted man, and felt sincere pleasure at what he honestly believed to be Ranuccio's pardon.

On the morrow the Spanish ambassador was the first to congratulate Sixtus V., with admirable *sang froid*, on his truly pious clemency. Olivares was only a diplomatist, but he played his part as well as if he had been a cardinal, and made every one believe that he had been the dupe of his accomplice. He had good reasons for so acting. His master, Philip II., seldom jested, more especially when the subject of the joke was the infallible head of the church; and he strongly suspected that the clocks of Madrid might prove less complaisant than those at Rome.

Poor Angeli was the only sufferer. For no other crime than that of not wearing a watch, the pope

\* In Italy the hours are reckoned from 1 to 24, commencing at sunset.

deprived him of his office, and imprisoned him for some time in Fort St Angelo. As to Cardinal Farnese, renouncing all the praises and congratulations of his friends at Rome, he prudently remained an absentee.\*

### THINGS TALKED OF IN LONDON.

October 1851.

THE friends of Sir J. Franklin, and all those interested in arctic explorations, have been excited and disappointed by the recent news brought from the polar regions by Captain Penny, who has come home with all hands in good condition. At headquarters, which of course means the Admiralty, the intelligence has been discussed with the usual amount of professional insight and rivalry, and judgment pronounced accordingly. In order to a proper understanding of the question, you must permit me to recapitulate various particulars which I have from time to time communicated. Sir James Ross was, as you will remember, sent out to look for Franklin in 1848; and such was the opinion entertained of his abilities, that every one expected he would accomplish all or more than all of the work intrusted to him. How miserably he failed, and how unexpectedly and undesired he came home towards the end of 1849, will not soon be forgotten. A general feeling prevailed that we ought not to abandon the search for the long-lost adventurers while the slightest hope existed of their being discovered; accordingly the government resolved on a comprehensive scheme, which should, if possible, finally settle the question. The arctic sea was to be penetrated from the east and the west. Captain Collinson was sent out with two ships—the *Enterprise* and *Investigator*—in January 1850, to try what could be done by way of Behring's Strait; one of the vessels got well up and into the ice last autumn, and Captain Maclure, her commander, hoped to push his way far to the eastward before winter set in, and intended when frozen up to send out walking-parties in the same direction, in the hope of falling in with other parties from the opposite quarter. Captain Collinson wintered at Hong-Kong, and is now probably following on the track of Maclure. The next measure was the equipment of the ships *Resolute* and *Assistance*, and the steamers *Pioneer* and *Intrepid*, forming an expedition of which Captain Austin was appointed chief, and Captain Ommanney second in command. Two other vessels, the *Lady Franklin* and *Sophia*, were placed under the charge of Captain Penny, a whaler of much experience and ability; Sir John Ross came forward to aid the search in a ship fitted out by private enterprise; and last, the squadron was increased by two schooners from the United States, sanctioned by the American government. Besides all these, *Lady Franklin* sent out a small vessel on her own account. The ships sailed in April and May of last year; and after exploring the shores of Lancaster Sound and Barrow's Strait, wintered at Cornwallis Island, having discovered nothing of the missing expedition except traces of an encampment at which a number of bones and some pieces of rope were collected, and considered of such value that they were brought home to be examined. The excitement created by the arrival of the *Prince Albert*, *Lady Franklin's* ship, with these relics, and a rumour of a wholesale slaughter of English crews by Esquimaux, you will probably not have forgotten. In the spring of the present year, before the ships were released from their winter quarters, several walking-parties were organised and sent out to prosecute the search. By these the northern and southern shores of Barrow's Strait were diligently explored; Melville Island and the Winter Harbour of Parry were revisited; and the vicinity explored up to 106 degrees of west longitude, and up to 104 degrees in

the latitude of Cape Walker. New land was seen to the north-west, and from the discoveries made there is reason to believe that Banks Land is continuous with the land already known on the south of the strait; and the conclusion appears to be inevitable that Sir John Franklin did not pass to the westward of Wellington Channel. It was known that he had thoughts of attempting this inlet, as Parry had seen it on one or two occasions clear of ice; the exploration of it was therefore intrusted to Captain Penny as a special task. Having forced his way up as far as the ice would permit, he started with a walking-party to continue the search; and at eighty miles from the mouth of the channel came to a second broad inlet, dotted with islands, stretching away to the north-west, all open water as far as could be seen, and presenting indications of the same to the remotest point of vision. This was encouraging; but as nothing could be done without a boat, the captain retraced his steps, mounted a boat on a sledge, went back to the new inlet, which he named *Victoria*, embarked on it, and, in conjunction with his assistants, explored more than 300 miles of its shores, when provisions failing, he was obliged to return once more to his ships. Here he found Captain Austin, and proposed to renew the search with more efficient means. It appears, however, that his wishes were overruled. Captain Penny was bound, by his instructions, to return to England this autumn; and has recently arrived, bringing with him a collection of relics obtained from Cape Riley, which proves to have been Franklin's quarters for the winter of 1845-46. The relics consist of portions of ropes, part of an old sail with the name *Terror* stamped on it, a cask, and a finger-post: the latter was lying on the ground near three graves in which three seamen belonging to the expedition had been buried. Thus all we know respecting the veteran Sir John, his colleague Crozier, and their companions is—that they wintered at Cape Riley during the first winter after their leaving England; that three of their number died and were buried; that the ships went away—and then all trace is lost. Since that time six years have passed; and if any of the long-lost party still survive, how painful must have been their sufferings from privation, severity of climate, and hope deferred!

Captain Austin states in his dispatches that, not considering any further exploration of Wellington Channel and its upper waters desirable, he was preparing to make his way to Jones's Sound at the head of Baffin's Bay, considering it probable that Franklin may have got to the north-west by that opening. So far as is known it has never yet been explored; and it is considered by those competent to judge as affording less prospect of success than appeared in Wellington Channel. To have abandoned the latter seems like throwing away the only promising opportunity that has hitherto presented itself; the more so, as we may believe the open water discovered by Captain Penny to be one margin of the arctic sea or polar basin, the existence of which has long been known, and more than once visited by Russian adventurers from the coast of Siberia: its diameter is about 2500 miles. Across it lies the shortest route to Behring's Strait, and it is possible that Franklin, if he got up Wellington Channel to the open water, may still be sailing about it, trying to find an outlet. What attempt will be made to verify this supposition we cannot tell until further news come from the north. Sir John Ross, who has just reported his return, having left the ice on the 13th August, brings no additional intelligence: he inclines to the opinion that Franklin did not go up Wellington Channel, but that he was attacked, as rumoured, by the Esquimaux. This again painfully involves the question. It is said that Captain Penny has offered to return forthwith to Wellington Channel if the

\* The above is abridged from the French of Edouard Fournier.

Admiralty will grant him a steamer for the purpose: winter, however, would have set in before he could arrive on the spot.

This subject has led me to greater length than I intended. I could not, however, close it, without giving you a complete summary of a question which engages a more than ordinary share of attention, and so trust to your indulgence.

To pass from a cold region to a hot one, let me say a few words about the famous Egyptian obelisk, known to us as 'Cleopatra's Needle,' and to the Arabs, even ages ago, as 'Pharaoh's Packing-Needle.' It has rather suddenly come to be a subject of talk; and the reason why appears to be briefly as follows:—It is very old, having been cut from the quarries at Syene, 750 miles from where it now lies on the beach at Alexandria, in the reign of Thothmosis III., at the time when Thebes was in its glory. Most of the inscriptions on the stone were the work of this monarch and his successor Sesostris, and on this account is held to be the more interesting. It appears that this obelisk had been set up on a pedestal near a companion needle of similar proportions; that it fell down in course of time, and eventually became half buried in drifting sand. Thus it lay when the British army, having achieved a victory in Egypt, resolved on bringing home the monument as a trophy of their valour. A vessel was purchased, and machinery and apparatus prepared for lifting and shipping the ponderous mass in 1801, when the operations were stopped by order of the general in command at Malta. In 1820 Mehemet Ali made a present of the neglected monument to George IV., thereby confirming our claim to it; but nothing was done towards its removal; and an enterprising Frenchman suggested that it might be conveyed to Paris in the same vessel that carried the Luxor obelisk from Egypt to the Place de la Concorde in 1830, as though to rebuke our slowness.

The subject, although half a century old, has not been forgotten: it was mentioned in parliament, and since then all sorts of projects have been published for the embarkation and transport of the huge monolith. Some say that it should be set up in the courtyard of the British Museum; others that Hyde Park would be a more fitting place, as the monument would then serve as a striking memorial of the Great Exhibition. Let us get the stone first, and then we will determine what shall be done with it. Its dimensions are extraordinary—being 64 feet long, 8 feet square at the base, and weighing about 240 tons. Notwithstanding a general wish that it should be 'sent for,' an influential authority states that it is 'scarcely worth the trouble and expense of the undertaking;' and adds, that 'it will cause disappointment if it is expected to prove an ornament, as it is in a very mutilated state, the edges being broken off, and the hieroglyphics much defaced.' The length at present uncovered by the sand is about thirty-five feet from the apex, with from three to four feet down the sides; and the whole of what is visible is in the same dilapidated condition. It must also be said that the longer it is left in its present position the worse it will become, from the anxiety of all travellers to possess pieces of it, which the native boys knock off largely to sell. The base of the obelisk is about twenty feet distant from the sea, and the city-wall will have to be broken through to remove it. The water is only two feet deep at the distance of fifteen feet from the shore, nine feet deep at twenty fathoms, and twenty feet deep at 200 fathoms' distance.' From these particulars some idea may be formed of the nature of the undertaking as regards the removal, and an inference drawn as to its ever being attempted.

Next, there are certain American patents to be talked about, some of them perhaps more amusing than useful. Judge for yourself:—For 'improvements in balloons, and their appendages;' 'in exercising

chairs;' 'in magnetic needles;' for a 'pocket-filter and drinking-tube;' 'a trap for catching flies;' a 'submarine telescope;' 'to be used under water;' 'for slitting clothes-pegs;' 'improved machinery for making pill-boxes;' another is a contrivance which has claims on the notice of people who wash dishes. According to the description, 'the crockery or other articles of table furniture are placed in a machine fitted to receive them, and then to wash them by turning a shaft, with arms and buckets so arranged as to throw the water upon the crockery with force, and thus act upon and clean each article.' Another is a varnish wherewith to protect hams, fruit, and vegetables, composed of a 'union of resin, shell-lac, and lintseed oil.' Another is for improved 'hames,' so fitted to the shape of the horse's neck as to make the pressure greatest where the muscle is thickest, and at the same time to render 'displacement or disarrangement of the collar almost impossible, and prevent much, and in most cases all chafing.' Then comes something interesting to agriculturists in their newly-awakened spirit of enterprise—'a cultivating seed-planter,' which is 'a combination of the roller and the harrow for crushing and pulverising the soil, with the cultivator teeth for forming the furrows and depositing the seed, the roller preceding the harrow, and both preceding the cultivator teeth.' Another is intended for the benefit of those who incline to grow honey as well as wheat and barley: it is called the 'bee-moth trap,' and 'consists in making the bottom or floor of the hive of two opposite oblique surfaces, approximating to two sides of a prism, with a fluted roller revolving in the partial interval between their converging edges, which roller is rotated by the air operating on a vane or wind-wheel on the outside. This keeps it almost constantly in operation; and as the bee-bread, refuse of the hive, droppings, and other matters, fall to the bottom, they are carried out by the grooves as they come round, and fall to the ground, the roller thus serving as a cleaner to the hive, preventing the accumulation of dirt and refuse of the operations of the bees, which are injurious as affording harbour for the miller, and likewise a temptation to her to enter the hive.'

Before quitting the subject of rural economy, let me mention here that the Royal Academy of Georgofili, at Florence, have offered a prize of 280 francs for a solution of the question—'To determine by experiment the quality of soil best adapted to the cultivation of leguminous plants, and the relative advantages of the various manures hitherto known, chiefly those consisting of inorganic matter;' also one of 500 francs and a gold medal for a thrashing-machine to supersede the present Tuscan mode of treading out corn by horses; and a third of 280 francs for an essay on the use of salt in cattle-feeding. Here, at home too, our Royal Agricultural Society have published their list of prizes which are to be given for forty-four different implements and instruments, including ploughs, drills, steam-engines, portable and stationary, pulverisers, crushers, bruisers, chaff-cutting machines, harrows, light wagons, hoes, rakes, and 'any new implement;' and 'for the best dynamometer especially applicable to the traction of ploughs.' Competitors are required to have all arrangements completed with the secretary before next May. There are, besides, prizes of from thirty to fifty sovereigns for the best report on farming in Herefordshire and Cumberland—on the manufacture of beet-root sugar—on seeds, and underwood, and other agricultural subjects, to be sent in by March; and last, one on guano, to be ready by 1854. It is a good sign to see agriculture thus on the move for improvements; it involves many moral as well as substantial considerations.

Now to come back to the American items: a patent has been obtained for a method of taking sheets of paper from a printing or paper-making machine by means of 'a cylinder or curved instrument that shall



receive such sheets and pile them upon a table provided for the purpose; and also in combining certain mechanical powers and movements with such table, that the accumulation of sheets thereon, by bringing into contact certain parts, produces a movement which causes the said table to descend in such manner as to keep the top of the pile upon it at nearly the same height constantly, the increase of the depth of said pile being used as a means by which to cause the apparatus for the purpose to perform its work.' Another invention is for simplifying the weaving of piled fabrics, one part of which is to use short wires, lapped in the middle for the loops, instead of the usual long wires. Another, similar in purpose, 'cuts the loops on the wires as the cloth is woven, by means of a reciprocating-knife combined with the weaving part of the loom;' and with this knife further combines 'a take-up roller,' which keeps the loops parallel, and 'wedge-formed guides,' which insure that the knife shall traverse truly, and 'a trough into which the wires drop, and a second trough into which they are successively transferred, that they may be carried back to and under the looping warps,' where they are ready to repeat their former operation. Another is for an 'improved mantelpiece,' made 'of glass or similar material, properly ornamented on its back by paint or otherwise, and surrounded and guarded by a cast-iron framework, which shields the glass from injury by accident; said metal-frame serving at the same time as an ornament, which can be highly elaborated into any pattern that the fancy of the manufacturer may suggest; and mantelpieces produced of the greatest beauty and durability at a comparatively small cost.'

One ingenious inventor proposes to ventilate railway carriages by a peculiar mode of fixing outside shutters; another professes to do the same and to prevent the entrance of dust, by 'attaching to one of the cars of a train a centrifugal fan, which is driven from one of the axletrees of the car: the blast thus generated being conveyed through the car by pipes, whence it is discharged by adjustable adjustages of peculiar form in the direction required to prevent the dust from entering the car.' You will see that nothing is said of what becomes of the passengers while this windy process is going on. The subject is one of much importance in the United States, owing to the great heat of summer and annoyance from sparks and dust thrown off from the wood burned in the locomotives. Hence the number of railway-carriage ventilation schemes is great. I add one more, thus prosily described by the inventors. They say: 'The object of our invention is to introduce into the several cars of a railroad-train a current or currents of air taken from some point or points forward of the smoke-pipe of the locomotive, and thereby not only to supply the cars with the required ventilation, but at the same time to produce in each car of the train an outward pressure of air, which will effectually prevent dust, smoke, and sparks from entering the cars; and to this end the nature of our invention consists in combining with the railroad-train a tube or tubes, united at the junction of each car in the train by a flexible or yielding joint, the said tube or tubes being carried farther forward than the chimney of the locomotive to receive the air in the front of the train, and the said tube or tubes being made to communicate with each car of the train, so that the current of air forced by the motion of the train into the forward end of the tubes, where it cannot be charged with dust, smoke, or sparks, may be thus caused to enter each car of the train.' And next, another gives 'the shell of a submerged propeller the form of a section cut from the open extremity of sea-shells,' whereby 'the mouth of the helical tube at which the water enters has a greater area than its hinder extremity, at which the water is discharged.' And last, a cunning individual in Alabama is said to have invented a machine calculated to be highly useful to the planters. It plants and cultivates cotton 'with

about one-fourth the usual labour to a man and horse, besides doing the work more neatly and better. It lays off the rows two at a time, the ridges being made in the usual way, opens the drill, drops the seed, and covers the same in two drills at the same operation, doing the work of seven or eight hands and four horses. It then harrows and scrapes both sides of two drills, chops out at the rate of two drills at a time, bars them, and cultivates, entirely breaking and stirring the ground the width of two rows at a time, superseding nearly all the necessity of scraping and hoeing through the season. The machine is worked with one horse, is very simple in its construction, and needs only one person to manage it.' If this machine will do all that is stated, perhaps some of our East India cotton-growers may be disposed to make trial of it, and Manchester will not be unwilling to encourage anything which increases the growth of cotton.

To touch upon astronomy is a sudden change of subject; but as what I have to say is American, it may be suitably introduced here. You are aware that the supposition of a third ring to Saturn has been reported from time to time for several years past, and at length verified by observers at Liverpool. The phenomenon has been perseveringly discussed by United States astronomers, who, after a diligent examination of it, and investigating it on numerous hypotheses, have come to the conclusion that the whole of Saturn's rings are fluid, and not solid, and not of equal density. They are preserved intact, because 'the satellites are constantly disturbing the ring; but in the very act of perturbation they are sustaining it in its place. Their sustaining action is not negative, but positive; and without satellites there can be no ring.' Among other conclusions to which they have been led by the interesting inquiry is, that 'delicate micrometrical measurements of the rings shew that they are not of uniform thickness. May not this accumulation of matter on one side be the incipient nucleus of a satellite? If so, it will be reserved for future astronomers to witness a scene no less amazing than the formation of a new world within the limits of the solar system.'

We are shortly to get further information respecting the law of storms—a subject, on many accounts, of growing importance to science and commerce. A circular was issued some time ago from the Colonial Office to parties in foreign countries, and another has just been sent out by Lord Palmerston to British consuls abroad, containing a series of inquiries suggested by Lieutenant-Colonel Reid, who, as you are aware, has done much towards elucidating the law of storms. 'In order'—so runs the missive—'that an investigation of this nature may be practically useful, it is essential that facts connected with the atmospheric phenomena in question should be carefully observed and accurately recorded over as large a portion as possible of the surface of the globe, by persons of education, and whose scientific attainments or professional avocations qualify them for making such observations.' It is suggested that 'captains of ports, masters of lighthouses, and harbour-masters,' would be competent to the task, as they are habitually observing the sky. The consuls are to send home half-yearly an abstract of the information obtained, and diagrams of the routes of remarkable storms when they can be procured. We shall probably get manifold data from many climates: meantime the Swedish government is about to send out the ship *Eugene* on a voyage of discovery and circumnavigation, with a scientific commission on board, nominated by the Royal Academy of Sciences at Stockholm. The French also are going to explore the Japanese sea with a frigate, corvette, and a steamer, to promote at the same time science and commerce, and make an attempt to renew European intercourse with Japan.

There appears now a prospect of our telegraphic communication with the continent becoming permanent, as

the wire is laid across the Channel, from the South Foreland to a point about four miles south of Calais. 'It consists of four copper wires of the thickness of an ordinary bell-wire, cased in gutta-percha, and twined with a corresponding number of hempen strands, steeped in a mixture of tar and tallow, into a rope of about an inch in diameter. Another strand, similarly prepared, is wound transversely round this; and, finally, ten wires of galvanised iron, about a third of an inch thick, are twined round this central core, and form a solid and at the same time flexible casing. The whole, when thus completed, has the appearance of an ordinary  $4\frac{1}{2}$  metallic cable.' The length is 24 miles, and the weight from 170 to 180 tons. Then there is Henley's underground telegraph, which, it is hoped, may become a means of diminishing accidents on railways. It needs no battery, and can be kept in working order with very little trouble. It has been tried at the Welwyn Tunnel, and the directors of the Great Northern have determined that no train shall enter a tunnel until a signal has been made from the opposite end that the preceding train has passed out. Apropos of railways, the frequent casualties of late have elicited a scheme for a 'Railway Passengers' Protection Society,' which all persons interested in the subject—and who is not?—are invited to join.

Go where you will in London at present you are sure to hear the means of travel talked about—a truly interesting subject. Projects are afoot for a monthly line of steamers to the Azores and the west coast of Africa: a Liverpool and Manchester company are at work on another line to run to Rio and other ports in South America, to commence next spring. The vessels are to be fitted with screws instead of paddles, and constructed on such models as will insure a speed of ten miles an hour. This movement, it is said, has originated in the great and increasing trade of Liverpool with Brazil. 'The departures from each end will be monthly, the boats calling at Lisbon for passengers and fuel. It is calculated that the passage to Rio will not exceed twenty-five days, and that the whole distance to the river Plate will be accomplished in thirty-five days, including the detention in Rio to transfer the cargo and passengers to the branch-boat.' Then there is to be another line of screw-steamers between Philadelphia and Liverpool, and Boston and Liverpool: one of the vessels belonging to the latter is to accommodate 1000 passengers. Another line is to ply from some ports in Virginia to certain ports in Europe; and last, another of four vessels, each of 1500 tons, to run from New York to Genoa, touching on the way at Madeira. If travelling facilities are to go on multiplying in this way, we shall soon want other worlds besides our own to circumnavigate.

I must compress my remaining items, or you will complain that I am running on to too great a length. So—Professor Horsford, while verifying the pendulum experiment in the Bunker Hill Monument, near Boston, found that the sides of the edifice opposite the sun expanded every day with the heat. Mr Young, of Manchester, has succeeded in solidifying gas—a result which Liebig said some time ago was 'one of the greatest wants of the age.' The substances obtained—a volatile oil, and paraffine—are entirely wasted in the present process of manufacturing coke. Cheap coal makes cheap gas; and now that we get coal cheap by railway, an offer has been made to 'lay on' gas to the great parish of Marylebone, at 4s. per 1000 feet. The number of bathers at the Euston Square Baths and Washhouses during the present year has been 15,897; of washers, 83,276: in 1847 the respective numbers were 15,630 and 15,576. The Society of Arts promise a prize-medal for a box with the best and most numerous set of water-colours and brushes—to sell at one shilling—and for the best and cheapest case of instruments. A fossil human footmark has been found in a red-sand-

stone quarry near Dumfries. What an excitement this fact, if true, will cause among geologists! And having occasionally reported to you the proceedings of Mr James Richardson, the African traveller, I may close this paragraph with the melancholy intelligence that the enterprising explorer died last March while on his travels near Bornou.

Before these lines appear in print the Exhibition will have closed, the medals will have been distributed, the bustle of packing and removal will have gone through most of its convulsions, and the grand and extraordinary spectacle will cease to exist, except in books, and in the memory of those who beheld it. Much will grow out of it: among the first results is a project for 'The International Institute,' by which 'it is proposed that the exhibitors, foreign as well as British, shall form themselves into an association, under a title that will commemorate the most interesting epoch in the history of nations, and that they seek the necessary powers to erect in some central situation a building upon an unprecedented scale of grandeur, as an International Museum and Emporium of Arts and Manufactures; where, as in its great prototype, the results of science and the choicest productions of art, in each branch of the world's industry, may from time to time be seen with the utmost facility for study; and where the inventive genius of every clime shall ever find encouragement and timely assistance—where every new invention shall have a place; where the inventor and the capitalist shall be brought into immediate and direct communication; and where, also, periodical exhibitions would take place, with a judicious distribution of prizes.'

Would not Smithfield make a capital site for such a building?

#### AN INTERESTING PRESSFUL OF BUSINESS-BOOKS.

We were lately much interested in being shewn by a friend, who has frequent occasion to use the treasures of a large public library, the ledgers and other business-books, along with the miscellaneous correspondence of a great joint-stock mercantile company. This bare intimation will not convey to the reader a notion of much exciting interest, since romance is seldom supposed to be perched on a three-legged stool, or to be embodied in the figures confined within vertical red lines. Yet these thoroughly business-looking books and papers had in them a strong and almost fascinating interest, and the greater part of our readers will probably be inclined to sympathise in this feeling when we state that they were the books and papers of the renowned Darien Company. That undertaking is unfortunately too well known in history. Yet to revive the memory of those whose recollection of it may be indistinct, and to save them the trouble of consulting some ponderous history, we shall give in a very few words a sketch of this celebrated adventure.

The people of Scotland could not fail to observe how much the commercial enterprise of England had enlarged its wealth and material happiness, and they desired to imitate so attractive an example. An ingenious schemer, named Paterson, concocted a plan for effecting this with the aid of English wealth. He was to obtain from the government certain privileges for a great trading company; and as these privileges would, it was deemed, secure to it beyond doubt a very lucrative trade, it was supposed that English capitalists would readily take shares in it, and swell the rather meagre capital to be expected from Scotland alone. It happened as he expected, and all went smoothly and triumphantly, when the great English trading companies took the alarm. They were determined at all events to prevent their own countrymen from investing capital in a rival trade, and they got parlia-

ment to take up their cause. Severe measures were threatened, and the English shareholders withdrew; but this only served to increase the excitement in Scotland, and it was resolved to make the adventure purely national. For this purpose subscription-books were opened in Edinburgh and Glasgow in February 1696. They excited a complete fervour throughout the land. Never was railway or mining adventure more recklessly run after. In a short time £400,000 were subscribed. This seems a small sum when we remember that in many a secondary Scottish manufacturing town as much railway stock has been subscribed. But we must take the assurance of contemporaries, that such at that time was the impoverished state of Scotland, that only by excruciating efforts, by borrowing, by exacting payment of debt, by selling land, and by clubbing small sums, could the amount which each subscriber desired to advance be procured.

When the money was engaged for and partly advanced, the next question was what should be done with it? In an evil moment the country went into the dazzling scheme of Paterson, and determined to create a Scottish colony. They selected the narrow neck of land sometimes called Darien and sometimes Panama, which joins the northern and the southern continents in America. They had thus in view the very object which has lately been so effectively recommenced—a commercial communication between the Atlantic and Pacific. There was no end to the dreams of richness and greatness which this project opened up to the ardent people of Scotland; but the first necessary step was to get themselves firmly planted on the spot. With this view an expedition was despatched, which took up its position at what seemed a suitable spot, and it was followed by several auxiliary detachments. We do not intend to go further here into the melancholy history of the colony, than to say that it was overwhelmed by disaster after disaster, and in the end failed utterly. Besides mismanagement and a wretched climate, it had to suffer from the hostile assaults of the Spanish; and as King William had taken the part of the English traders, who looked with jealousy and rancour on the colony, the poor adventurers, instead of obtaining aid from English colonies and English ships, were by them treated with little less severity than by their enemies of Spain. Not only was the capital lost, but many valuable lives were sacrificed, and the national pride was outraged. The event tended in the end to good, for the national animosities created by it shewed the imminent necessity of an incorporating union of the two kingdoms. This great project was brought to a conclusion, as all the world knows, in 1707. Never was a political event so earnestly deprecated as this connection with proud and wealthy England was by the equally proud but miserably impoverished Scots; never was event fraught with so lasting a heritage of benefits to those who saw in it the harbinger of misery. To get the treaty carried at all it was necessary to secure some immediate and tangible benefit to Scotland. Nothing could suit better than cash in hand; and a fund reaching the whimsically fractional amount of £398,085, 10s. was given by England to Scotland, and received the name of 'the equivalent.' It was applied partly to make up for the effect in Scotland of the larger public debt which England had incurred; and a considerable portion of it went to reimburse the losers by the Darien Scheme, who maintained that they were the victims of English interference, and were entitled to reimbursement from English money.

Such is a brief outline of the events of which the pressful of books and papers to which we have alluded is the still speaking record; and it will be admitted that such documents must possess no inconsiderable interest. A gentleman who superintended the printing for the Bannatyne Club of some of the letters and other documents in this collection, gives the following account of

it as a whole, and of the place where it is deposited:—'In an old oak-press in one of the under rooms of the Advocates' Library, there has been preserved a collection of books and loose papers, all connected with the proceedings of the company of Scotland trading to Africa and the Indies, commonly known as the Darien Company.

'Of these, certain bound volumes were the business-books of the company; and the loose papers are letters, accounts, and memorandums, of more or less importance. The editor has been unable to discover the circumstances under which this curious collection came into the possession of the Faculty of Advocates; but he thinks it probable that, when the affairs of the company were wound up after the Union, and its miscellaneous property was dispersed, the oak-press, containing the business-books of the establishment, was carried from the office, in Bristo Port, across the Cowgate, and deposited in the Advocates' Library, as an institution where it might not inappropriately be preserved, and which was conveniently near. The collection has been suffered to remain undisturbed in its original repository, except that a large mass of the miscellaneous papers appear to have been collected together, and bound up without reference to any method of arrangement. This mass constitutes the main source from which the contents of the following pages have been selected, and is referred to in the foot-notes as the "Miscellaneous Collection."

The business-books of the concern—journals, ledgers, stock-books, &c.—are remarkable for their gigantic size, as if even in them should be personified the vast ideas and bold projects of the undertakers. We had a rather startling illustration of their unusual size, since the friend who shewed us the collection, pulling one of the largest rather hastily from its shelf, was pressed backwards by its weight, so that, being encumbered with a lawyer's gown, he sank on the floor, and required to be relieved from the huge mass which kept him prostrate. Save in their size—but rarely rivalled—it would be difficult to distinguish these books from the contents of a banker's or joint-stock company's safe at the present day. They are bound exactly in the same manner in vellum, strengthened at the hinges by bands of thick leather, fastened with slips of vellum crossed or platted with a sort of faint attempt at ornament. And over this regular binding they have generally a sort of greatcoat of loose, soft, red leather, to give a temporary protection to the book during frequent and rapid use.

Nor are the interior aspect and substance of these books less remarkable than their merely external appearance. There are few who do not know how irregular, angular, and twisted is the ordinary writing of the seventeenth century, and how especially difficult it is without great practice to decipher accounts of that period. Now in the inferior books—such as the local accounts in the various towns, the cargo-books of the vessels, &c.—we find these cramped, old-fashioned methods in full use; but we never saw any manuscript more beautiful and distinct—we might say more modern looking—than the entries in the great books kept in the central office. The ink is still singularly black; the paper fine and white; and in flattening the pages of an unfinished account one might suppose that the clerk had just left his desk, and would come back to complete it. The system of double-entry is pursued; and altogether it would appear as if, under the presiding genius of the projector of the scheme, a stride had been at once taken from the old slovenly habits to the perfection of modern book-keeping. Calligraphers are a vain race. They count beautiful writing one of the fine arts—sometimes at the head of them. One can imagine the pride with which the so-soon-forgotten penmen looked over these pages, to lie nearly a century and a half in obscurity, and only furnish amusing reflections to those



who not only know not who they were, but do not, as in the case of more dignified memorials of skill, care to know.

Yet though one turns over these ponderous volumes with interest and admiration, there is one among them, dirty and torn, bearing marks of much and rough usage, and full of irregular, and sometimes illegible scrawls, which is endowed with still more interest: it is the subscription-book, in which those who adventured their means in the enterprise signed their names and set forth the sums for which they stood good. The date of the opening of the books is 26th February 1696, and on that day there were subscribed upwards of L.50,000. On the progress of the subscription, it is stated in the introduction to the club-book already cited, 'by far the greatest part of the whole amount was subscribed before the end of March. On the last day of that month there appears, for some reason or other, to have been a sort of rush upon the books. It is noticed on the margin that the subscriptions were continued during the afternoon; and that day presents 176 separate transactions. A separate book was opened at Glasgow on 5th March. The total amount entered in this book is L.56,325. In May and June the numbers in the general book became scanty—three, two, and sometimes but one entry being made in a day. The books were announced to be closed on the 3d of August, and on the 1st the whole sum was subscribed for. The subscriptions on this day—sixteen in number—give a sum of L.14,125. There was now no further opportunity for the tardy, the diffident, or those who could not raise sufficient means, partaking in the great adventure; and the last of the envied band—the destined participators in the boundless wealth of a new world—was the provost of Couper-of-Fife, whose name is pledged by Sir Archibald Mure for L.100. On that day the royal burghs as a body ventured for L.3000; and two merchants who were conspicuously connected with the scheme—James Balfour, merchant in Edinburgh, and William Arbuckle, merchant in Glasgow—entered for second subscriptions of L.1000 each. One of the books of the company betrays the secret of this transaction, and shews that the amount to which the stock was limited, L.400,000, was rather beyond than within what the country could promise to embark. In the "General Journal" there is, of date 2d February 1700, this entry: "Stock invested in the Company of Scotland trading to Africa and the Indies, Dr. to sundry accounts L.1000, for so much William Arbuckle subscribed for, the 1st August 1696, to complete the quota of L.400,000 stock, p. verbal order of the Council General; and in regard ditto Arbuckle paid in the several proportions of s<sup>d</sup> L.1000 out of his own private cash, therefore the Council General ordains that the said several proportions be repaid."

In looking over this list, consisting as it does of about 1500 of the best-off Scotsmen of the period, one cannot help being struck, almost to a humiliating extent, with the paucity of great names among them. After the nobility, notable chiefly through their rank and power, the only names known at the present day as those of distinguished men seem to be Andrew Fletcher of Saltoun, and Sir Robert Sibbald, whose political profligacy was after all more conspicuous than his scientific and antiquarian acquirements. Among men with conventional reputations there are George Lockhart of Carnwath, the Jacobite intriguer, and the respectable judge Lord Fountainhall. Some people would perhaps attach more value to the entry: 'I, Master David Williamsone, minister of the gospell at the West Church, subscriby for ane hundreth pounds sterlin', being, if we mistake not, the identical Dainty Davy of Scottish song. The clergy are pretty numerous, and so are the physicians, so that these two learned professions appear to have been at that time in a comfortable position. The number of landlords is of course

considerable, but there is a far larger proportion than we would naturally anticipate of burgesses and other traders. What enormous strides has Scotland made since these times!

### THE DROP OF DITCH-WATER.

[FROM THE DANISH OF ANDERSEN.]

We all know what a magnifying-glass is—a thing like a round spectacle-lens, which makes everything appear a hundred times larger than it really is. Take one of these glasses, hold it before your eye, and look into a drop of water taken from a ditch or stagnant pool: there you will see a thousand strange creatures, such as you would not have believed could have existed in the clear-looking drop of water before you. But the monsters *are* there, and there is no deception in the matter. They look like a whole dishful of water-spiders. See, too, how voracious they are! See how they tear each other limb from limb! Still they seem to be happy and comfortable after their own fashion.

Now there was once an old man—all the people called him Old Creep-Crawl—who would always have the best of everything; if he could not get it by any other means, then he had recourse to magic to obtain his ends. One day Old Creep-Crawl was sitting with a magnifying-glass in his hand looking at a drop of water taken from a puddle. Heugh! how it did creep and crawl! Each individual of the thousands of animals hopped and jumped at his own discretion, totally regardless of the feelings of his fellows, and they mangled and killed each other without mercy.

'Horrible!' said Old Creep-Crawl shuddering. 'I wonder if by any means one could induce them to live in ease and peace, so that each one might mind his own business.'

He sat down to consider and ponder over the matter, but no good plan occurring to him he called his magic to assist him. 'First,' said he, 'I will give them a colour, so that one may see them better.'

As he spoke, he poured in what looked like a drop of red wine; but it was more than wine: it was witches' blood, taken from the lobe of the ear—an extremely costly preparation, and a very valuable agent to a necromancer. Instantly all the creatures became of a general flesh colour, so that they looked for all the world like a population of wild men.

'What have you got there?' inquired another necromancer, who had no name—a peculiarity of which he was very proud.

'If you can tell me what it is, I will give it to you,' answered Creep-Crawl; 'but I fancy you will not know unless I tell you.'

The nameless man then peeped through the glass and saw—he saw, as he thought, a city full of wild men. The sight was frightful; but more frightful still was it to see how the citizens thrust and cuffed, slashed and hacked, bit and tore each other. Whoever was undermost wanted to come to the top, and those who were above wanted to stop there, and of course to keep the others down.

'Look, look! there goes one with a leg as long as my own. Bah! take it away—Stay, there is one with a little bump behind his ear—a little, insignificant bump; but it is an unlucky bump for him, and a deal of mischief will come of it. The other creatures catch sight of the bump, they rush at its possessor, knock and hammer him about, and now they have killed him. In another place I see one sitting as still and modest as a maiden, seeming to think of nothing but peace and quietness. No; she must go out among the others. There—they dash at her, and she is torn to pieces in a moment!'

'That's queer sport,' said the nameless magician.

'It is; but can you tell me what it is?' replied Creep-Crawl: 'can you read me the riddle?'

'Oh, that is plain enough,' replied the other. 'It represents Paris, or London, or some other large city—I don't know which, for they are all alike: it certainly is a large city.'

'It is only ditch-water!' growled Creep-Crawl.

#### EDUCATION IN NEW YORK.

How meanly does the present posture of general education in Great Britain, compare with what now prevails in New York! Let the reader peruse the following speech of Mr Raymond, one of the representatives of that city:

'I am proud, sir, to be able to stand here to-day, and say that the city of New York offers a free education to every child within her limits. She has erected about 200 houses for school purposes, with all the appliances of scientific and mechanical invention; she employs the best teachers whose services can be procured; she purchases books, stationery, everything required in such schools—and then, sir, she throws the doors wide open to the free admission and instruction of every child within her borders. There is not a child in the darkest street or narrowest lane, or the most crowded court of that most densely crowded city—no matter how destitute he may be—there is not one so poor and friendless that he may not walk up to the door of the best schoolhouse in that great city, and demand the very best education which its wealth can procure. Nor does she stop there, sir. She has organised eighteen evening-schools, and provided teachers for them, at which children and adults, whose necessities require them to labour during the day, may attend during the evening and receive the rudiments of education. Nay, more; she has organised and established a Free Academy, where any child whose faculties and whose industry qualify him therefore, may receive, under able and accomplished teachers, and with all the aids and appliances which money can command, an education equal to that afforded in the best of your colleges throughout the state. And this, sir, without money and without price. All this, sir, does New York city provide for the instruction of those into whose hands her destinies are to be committed. And all the property within her borders is taxed to pay the expense thereof. The man with his hundreds of thousands, and without a single child to reap the advantages of the schools, pays his tax for their support, and feels that he is only doing the duty which he owes to the community in which he lives and with which his interests are identified. The tax-payers there, onerous as is the tax imposed upon them, make no complaints that their property is taken for the use of others without their consent, or that they are compelled to educate children not their own. They feel that they are parts of the society in which they live—that they hold their possessions in subordination to the necessities of that society—and that their interest, as well as their duty, compels them to aid in the education of all its children.'

#### LONDON STATION STATISTICS.

The passenger-carriages afford eleven miles of seat-room, and would accommodate 40,196 individuals, or the whole population of two such towns as Northampton. The loading surface of the goods equals eleven acres, and would convey 40,000 tons. If the tires of all the company's wheels were welded into one ring they would form a circle of seventy-two miles. To keep this rolling stock up in number and efficiency there are two establishments—one at Camden Town and one at Wolverton.—*Sidney's Rides on Railways.*

#### PARTIAL SYSTEMS OF EDUCATION.

Among the heathen nations, the Persians in the time of Cyrus considered the virtues, especially justice and gratitude, as the main object of education; among the Athenians, accomplishments in arts, sciences, and letters were the end; and among the Spartans, obedience was the sole principle of instruction, because that would preserve the ascendancy of the laws. Yet neither of these answered their designs. Persia acquired some of the milder virtues, but failed in strength and hardihood; Athens found that neither art nor science would avail against depravity of morals; and Sparta found that it was not enough to secure

obedience to laws without considering their nature and effect; Persia fell a victim to luxury, Athens to licentiousness, and Sparta to tyranny. Such are the lessons of antiquity, and its splendid wreck remains an example to warn us against the dangers of partial systems. But under the new light which the Christian system has thrown over the power and destiny of the soul a different view has been taken of the end and means of education. We consider the object of education as twofold: one, to improve and strengthen the mind itself; the other, to endow it with whatever is valuable or auxiliary in the duties of life.—*E. D. Mansfield.*

#### THE CHURCH IN THE WILDERNESS.

BY MRS ALARIC WATTS.

[The principal part of the inhabitants of a village in the north of England, desirous of bettering their condition, resolved some few years ago to seek their fortune as settlers in the backwoods of Canada. Having arrived at this conclusion, they waited on the minister of their parish church in a body to ask him to accompany them in their wanderings, 'lest they should forget God in the wilderness.' The good man appealed to his wife, who replied in the words of Ruth: 'Whither thou goest I will go; where thou lodgest I will lodge; thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God; where thou diest I will die, and there will I be buried,' &c. A small grant from a society established for missionary purposes prevented the pastor from being burdensome to his flock in the first instance. The little colony is now in a very flourishing condition; and a description given by the clergyman of 'their first Sabbath in the bush' to a friend of my own suggested the idea of the following poem:—]

BENEATH a forest's shadows dim,  
Beyond the broad Atlantic sea,  
Uprose—strange sound—the matin hymn,  
Startling the vagrant bee.  
Music those skies had never heard,  
Save voice of stream or song of bird.  
And youth and age were gathered there  
Alike to brave life's changeable weather;  
Warrior and peasant joined in prayer,  
Bowed down in love together.  
There, where no Christian foot had trod,  
The wanderers sought their fathers' God.  
Their altar was but logs unhewn,  
By woman's willing fingers piled.  
First offering hers—a fitting boon  
Won from the desert wild.  
Had sculptured cedar shone more fair  
To Him, who owned that offering there.  
Sweet words that spoke of peace and love,  
Proclaimed in a familiar tone,  
The welcome message from above,  
To hearts that were his own.  
Another fold his flock must find;  
Say, could their shepherd stay behind?  
Sweet counsel, urged with accent bland,  
He gave; but coldness o'er them crept.  
He saw—ho blessed their native land:  
The floodgates burst—they wept, they wept!  
O England! could thy deathless sway  
The Atlantic's waters wash away?  
But dovelike Peace at length came down  
The fainting heart to heal and bless;  
And Faith and Hope, their joy to crown,  
Sprang up in that lone wilderness.  
The Lord they sought had there been found;  
The desert place was holy ground!

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